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DOCTOR WATTS' PREFACE

TO THE

PSALMS OF DAVID,

IMITATED

In the Language of the New Testament;

AND TO HIS

Hymns and Spiritual Songs.

WITH

OBSERVATIONS AND REMARKS,

BY

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They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.—*Isaiah I. 29.*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of the following observations and remarks is one of those who have formerly considered the difference between what is called "Rouse's version of David's Psalms," and the Psalms of Dr. Watts, to be so trivial, that it ought never to have been agitated in the christian church. Indeed, so great was his apathy concerning this subject, that he seldom gave it a moment's consideration; he knew that it had long been a source of difficulties in the church, that it has created party feelings and contentions & animosities whenever it had been agitated, & therefore he determined to let it rest. He had always been accustomed to the use of the Psalms of Scripture, and he imagined that his predilection for them arose merely from habit; and therefore he was disposed to make allowance for the predilection of those who had been accustomed to Watts'; he still, however, continued the use of the Old Psalms in his public ministrations, although contrary to the wishes of many of his congregation; and to his pertinacity in the use of them he is indebted for a large portion of his troubles in the gospel ministry. Just about the period when his mind began to be somewhat agitated on the subject, & in doubt what course was the best to be pursued, Mr. M^rMaster gave to the world his excellent "Apology for the Psalms of Scripture." This he read with care and much anxiety, and then gave the subject all the attention which his circumstances would admit of. From that period his course was decided. He blamed himself for having so long delayed to bear his testimony for the truth, and immediately took a determined stand in favor of the songs of divine inspiration.

He now confesses with shame that his former inattention to this subject was exceedingly culpable; for he has reason to fear that it arose, at least in part, from too great a desire not to offend certain leading characters who at that time belonged to his congregation. It grieves him also to reflect that many on whom he then might have had some influence are now so far gone into delusion that there is no longer any hopes of reclaiming them: but still he considers it his duty to state the truth; and he trusts that those who are acquainted with him will not impute it to selfish

should be to speak the truth without any improper influence from fear or affection; the warmth of our feelings will no doubt sometimes lead us into errors of expression; but every man of candor will know how to judge on this subject, and will make those allowances which charity demands.

Upon the whole the writer is confident that he is *speaking on God's behalf*, and in defence of the divine institutions;—he is assured, by the testimony of his conscience, that he speaks *with simplicity and godly sincerity*; and that his chief desire, next to the honor of God, is to benefit mankind, and especially the souls entrusted to his care. He is deeply convinced from long and diligent study of the prophecies, and from as attentive, and as accurate observation of the state of the religious world as his opportunities would allow, that we are now upon the eve of some eventful change in the providence of God. He firmly believes that the introduction of human inventions into the worship of Jehovah has greatly contributed to cast a veil over the real circumstances of the christian church; and was the chief means by which *the least that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit* has been enabled, in these days *to make war against the witnesses of truth and to overcome them and kill them.*—He is equally certain, from the events which have lately taken place in the world and from the change that has lately taken place in his own mind, and in the minds of others whose writings he has consulted, or with whom he has conversed, that the witnesses have now begun to rise from the dead, and that they shall soon stand upon their feet, *and great fear shall fall upon them that behold them.*—Ignorance and inattention will no doubt blindfold the eyes of many. We are told by the apostle Peter, that *there shall come in these last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Such characters will no doubt endeavor to turn these observations into ridicule; but the day of vengeance will come upon them suddenly: *for when they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.*

These things being premised, the candid attention of the reader is earnestly requested to the following subject. He will not find much that is new; but he will find some important things that have been thrown aside and almost forgotten.

THE PREFACE.

WHILE we sing the praises of our God in his church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the nearest akin to heaven; and it is a pity that this, of all others, should be performed the worst upon earth. The gospel brings us nearer to the heavenly state than all the former dispensations of God amongst men: And in these last days of the gospel, we are brought almost within sight of the kingdom of our Lord; yet we are very much unacquainted with the songs of the *New Jerusalem*, and unpractised in the work of praise. To see the dull indifference, the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly, while the psalm is on their lips, might tempt even a charitable observer to suspect the servency of inward religion; and it is much to be feared, that the minds of most of the worshippers are absent or unconcerned.—Perhaps the modes of preaching in the best churches, still want some degrees of reformation; nor are the methods of prayer so perfect as to stand in need of no correction or improvement; but, of all our religious solemnities, *Psalmody* is the most unhappily managed; that very action, which should elevate us to the most delightful and divine sensation, doth not only flat our devotion, but too often awakens our regret, and touches all the springs of uneasiness within us.

I have been long convinced, that one great occasion of this evil, arises from the matter and words to which we confine all our songs. Some of them are almost opposite to the spirit of the gospel; many of them foreign to the state of the New Testament, and widely different from the present circumstances of Christians. Hence it comes to pass, that when spiritual affections are excited within us, and our souls are raised a little above this earth in the beginning of a psalm, we are checked on a sudden in our ascent towards heaven, by some expressions that are most suited to the days of *carnal ordinances*, and fit only to be sung in the *worldly sanctuary*. When we are just entering into an evangelic frame, by some of the glories of the gospel presented in the brightest figures of *Judaism*, yet the very next line perhaps which the clerk parcels out unto us, hath something in it so extremely *Jewish* and cloudy, that darkens our

sight of God the Saviour. Thus, by keeping too close to *David* in the house of God, the veil of *Moses* is thrown over our hearts. While we are kindling into divine love by the meditations of the *loving kindness of God, and the multitude of his tender mercies*, within a few verses some dreadful curse against men is proposed to our lips: That *God would add iniquity unto their iniquity, nor let them come into his righteousness, but blot them out of the book of the living*, Psal. lxxix. 26; 27, 28, which is so contrary to the new commandment of *loving our enemies*; and even under the Old Testament is best accounted for, by referring it to the spirit of prophetic vengeance. Some sentences of the *Psalmist* that are expressive of the temper of our own hearts, and the circumstances of our lives, may compose our spirits to seriousness; and allure us to a sweet retirement within ourselves, but we meet with a following line, which so peculiarly belongs but to one action or hour of the life of *David*, or of *Asaph*, that breaks off our song in the midst; our consciences are affrighted, lest we should speak a falsehood unto God: Thus the powers of our souls are shocked on a sudden, and our spirits ruffled, before we have time to reflect that this may be sung only as a history of ancient saints; and perhaps, in some instances, that salvo is hardly sufficient neither: Besides, it almost always spoils the devotion, by breaking the uniform thread of it: For while our lips and our hearts run on sweetly together, applying the words to our own case, there is something of divine delight in it; but at once we are forced to turn off the application abruptly, and our lips speak nothing but the heart of *David*. Thus our own hearts are, as it were, forbid the pursuit of the song, and then the harmony and the worship grow dull of mere necessity.

Many ministers, and many private christians, have long groaned under this inconvenience, and have wished, rather than attempted a reformation. At their importunate and repeated requests, I have, for some years past devoted many hours of leisure to this service. Far be it from my thoughts to lay aside the book of Psalms in public worship; few can pretend so great a value of them as myself. It is the most artful, most devotional, and divine collection of poesy; and nothing can be supposed more proper to raise a pious soul to heaven, than some parts of that book; never was a piece of experimental divinity so nobly written, and so justly revered and admired: But it must be acknowledged still, that there are a thousand lines in it which were not made for a church in our days, to assume as its own: There are also many deficiencies of light and glory, which our Lord *Jesus*, and his apostles have supplied in the writings of the

New Testament; and with this advantage I have composed these spiritual songs, which are now presented to the world.—Nor is the attempt vain-glorious or presuming; for in respect of clear evangelical knowledge, *The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than all the Jewish prophets*, Matth. xi. 11.

Now let me give a short account of the following compositions.

The greatest part of them are suited to the general state of the gospel, and the most common affairs of Christians. I hope there will be very few found but what may properly be used in a religious assembly, and not one of them but may well be adapted to some seasons, either of private or of public worship. The most frequent tempers and changes of our spirit, and conditions of our life, are here copied, and the breathings of our piety expressed according to the variety of our passions, our love, our fear, our hope, our desire, our sorrow, our wonder, and our joy, as they are refined into devotion, and act under the influence and conduct of the blessed Spirit; all conversing with God the Father by the new and living way of access to the throne, even the person and mediation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. To him also, even to the *Lamb that was slain, and now lives*, I have addressed many a song; for thus doth the Holy Scripture instruct and teach us to worship, in the various short patterns of Christian *Psalmody* described in the *Revelations*. I have avoided the more obscure and controverted points of Christianity, that we might all obey the direction of the word of God, and *sing his praises with understanding*, Psal. xlvii. 7. The contentions and distinguishing words of sects and parties are secluded, that whole assemblies might assist at the harmony, and different churches join in the same worship without offence.

If any expressions occur to the reader, that savour of an opinion different from his own, yet he may observe, these are generally such as are capable of an extensive sense, and may be used with a charitable latitude. I think it is most agreeable, that what is provided for public singing, should give to sincere consciences as little disturbance as possible. However, where any unpleasing word is found, he that leads the worship may substitute a better, for (blessed be God!) we are not confined to the words of any man in our public solemnities.

The whole book is written in four sorts of metre, and fitted to the most common tunes. I have seldom permitted a stop in the middle of a line, and seldom left the end of a line without one, to comport a little with the unhappy mixture of reading

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and singing, which cannot presently be reformed. The metaphors are generally sunk to the level of vulgar capacities. I have aimed at ease of numbers and smoothness of sound, and endeavored to make the sense plain and obvious. If the verse appears so gentle and flowing as to incur the censure of feebleness, I may honestly affirm that sometimes it cost me labor to make it so. Some of the beauties of poesy are neglected, and some wilfully defaced, I have thrown out the lines that were too sonorous, and have given an allay to the verse, lest a more exalted turn of thought or language should darken or disturb the devotion of the weakest souls. But hence it comes to pass, that I have been forced to lay aside many hymns after they were finished, and utterly exclude them from this volume, because of the bolder figures of speech that crowded themselves into the verse, and a more unconfined variety of number, which I could not easily restrain.

These, with many other divine and moral composures, are now printed in a second edition of the poems entitled *Horæ Luricæ*; for, as in that book I have endeavored to please and profit the politer part of mankind, without offending the plainer sort of christians, so in this it has been my labor to promote the pious entertainment of souls truly serious, even of the meanest capacity, and at the same time (if possible) not to give disgust to persons of richer sense, and nicer education; and I hope, in the present volume, this end will appear to be pursued with much greater happiness than in the first impression of it, though the world assures me the former has not much reason to complain.

The whole is divided into three books.

In the first I have borrowed the sense and much of the form of the song, from some particular portions of scripture, and have paraphrased most of the doxologies in the New Testament, that contain any thing in them peculiarly evangelical; and many parts of the Old Testament, also that have a reference to the times of the *Messiah*. In these I expect to be often censured for a too religious observance of the words of scripture, whereby the verse is weakened and debased according to the judgment of critics: But as my whole design was to aid the devotion of Christians, so more especially in this part: And I am satisfied I shall hereby attain two ends, viz. assist the worship of all serious minds, to whom the expressions of scripture are very dear and delightful, and gratify the taste and inclination of those who think nothing must be sung unto God but the transla-

Gods of his word. Yet you will always find in this paraphrase dark expressions enlightened, and the *Levitical* ceremonies and *Hebrew* forms of speech changed into the worship of the gospel, and explained in the language of our time and nation; and what would not bear such an alteration, is omitted and laid aside.— After this manner should I rejoice to see a good part of the book of *Psalms* fitted for the use of our churches, and *David* converted into a Christian: But because I cannot persuade others to attempt this glorious work, I have suffered myself to be persuaded to begin, and have, through divine goodness, already proceeded half way through.

The *second part* consists of hymns, whose form is mere human composure; but I hope the sense and materials will always appear divine. I might have brought some text or other, and applied it to the margin of every verse, if this method had been as useful as easy. If there be any poems in the book that are capable of giving delight to persons of a more refined taste and polite education, perhaps they may be found in this part; but except they lay aside the humor of criticism, and enter into a devout frame, every ode here already despairs of pleasing. I confess myself to have been too often tempted away from the more spiritual designs I proposed, by some gay and flowery expressions that gratified the fancy; the bright images too often prevailed above the fire of divine affection; and the light exceeded the heat: Yet I hope in many of them, the reader will find, that devotion dictated the song, and the head and hand are nothing but interpreters and secretaries to the heart: Nor is the magnificence or boldness of the figures comparable to that divine license which is found in the eighteenth and sixty-eighth *Psalms*, several chapters of *Job*, and other poetical parts of scripture: And in this respect I may hope to escape the reproof of those who pay a sacred reverence to the Holy Bible.

I have prepared the *third part* only for the celebration of the Lord's supper, that, in imitation of our blessed Saviour, we might sing an hymn after we had partaken of the bread and wine. Here you will find some paraphrases of scripture, and some other compositions. There are above an hundred hymns in the two former parts, that may very properly be used in the ordinance, and sometimes, perhaps, appear more suitable than any of these last: But there are expressions generally used in these which confine them only to the table of the Lord; and therefore, I have distinguished and set them by themselves.

If the Lord, who inhabits the praises of *Israel*, shall refuse to

smile upon this attempt for the reformation of psalmody amongst the churches, yet I humbly hope, that the blessed Spirit will make these composures useful to private Christians; and if they may but attain the honor of being esteemed pious meditations, to assist the devout and retired soul in the exercises of love, faith, and joy, it will be a valuable compensation of my labors: My heart shall rejoice at the notice of it, and my God shall receive the glory. This was my hope and view in the first publication; and it is now my duty to acknowledge to him with thankfulness how useful he has made these compositions already to the comfort and edification of societies and of private persons: And upon the same grounds I have a better prospect, and a bigger hope of much more service to the church, by the large improvements of this edition, if the Lord who dwells in Zion shall favor it with his continued blessing.



NOTE.—In all the longer hymns, and in some of the shorter, there are several stanzas included in crotchets, []; which stanzas may be left out in singing, without disturbing the sense.—Those parts are also included in such crotchets, which contain words too poetical for meaner understandings, or too particular for the whole congregation to sing. But after all, it is best, in public psalmody, for the minister to choose the particular parts and verses of the Psalm and Hymn that is to be sung, rather than leave it to the judgment or casual determination of him that leads the tune.

NOTE.—Since the sixth edition of this book, the author has finished what he has so long promised, viz. The Psalms of David imitated in the language of the New Testament; which the world seems to have received with approbation, by the sale of some thousands in a year's time. It is presumed, that the book, in conjunction with this, may appear to be such a sufficient provision for psalmody, as to answer most occasions of the Christian's life: And if an author's own opinion may be taken, he esteems it the greatest work that he has ever published, or ever hopes to do, for the use of the churches.

March 3, 1720/

OBSERVATIONS.

THAT part of the exercises of devotion by which we celebrate in songs the praise of our God, is truly the most elevated of all the christian duties. It is "the part of worship which is the nearest akin to heaven" All our duties are designed to prepare us for this. This is the combined perfection of them all. We are to sing the doctrines of the truth of God in which we have been instructed, we are to celebrate the perfections of God which he has revealed to us. We express in our praises all the varied emotions of heavenly joy, & godly sorrow; our fears, our troubles, our repentance, our conviction of sin, our sense of pardon, our comfort and our hopes, in a word, every sentiment and feeling of the Christian's heart may be made an offering to God in the exercise of praise.

The praises of the church of God are advancing towards perfection; as every christian is always advancing towards the stature of a perfect man in the Lord Jesus Christ, so the whole united body of worshippers are always making some progress in the knowledge of God and in the purity of worship. The church in ancient times were wholly ignorant, or had dark and contracted views of many subjects in religion, which are as clear to us as the noon-day sun; and there are still, no doubt, many subjects in religion, of which our views are dark and contracted, but which will be altogether bright and glorious in the eyes of posterity: and thus the church is gradually advancing towards the light and glory of the heavenly state.

But this gradual advancement of the church towards perfection is not to be measured by her progress in any particular age or country. It is not like the laws of gravity, by which the motion of a falling body is constantly accelerated. It is rather like the influence of light from the dawning of the morning to the brightness of noon. The sun is frequently obscured by clouds which leave some parts of the earth's surface in comparative darkness; but still it is true that the light is increasing: so the church of God has been advancing ever since the beginning. In some ages and in some countries the light has been partially obscured; but it has always shone with greater splendor, when that obscuration was removed; we have now strong ground to believe that the last clouds which obscure the glory of the church are about to pass away, and that we shall soon be

blessed with the "sight of the kingdom of our Lord." God will soon be glad to say to his church, and will accompany his word with power to produce the effect: *arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

But we may rest assured that this blessed light, which in these latter days shall enlighten the world, will not only proceed altogether from the word of God, but it will teach men to esteem, respect and reverence the word of God more than they did before. We shall always indeed have reason to lament our own dullness, and want of readiness to apprehend the blessed truth of the gospel, which is constantly pouring in upon us from divine revelation; and to be ashamed and grieved for our negligence and hardness of heart "while the Psalm is on our lips;" because every one drags after him *a body of sin and death*: which is an impediment in the performance of every christian duty: but we shall learn to ascribe our sins to the proper cause, & not to the *matter and words* which God has given us to be offered to him in praise.

Every accurate observer of mankind, who has attended the worship of God in churches where the psalms of scripture are exclusively used, will no doubt, in the present days, as well as in the days of Dr. Watts, have some reason to suspect the fervency of inward religion in many; and perhaps, in some congregations, he may be led to conclude that there is very little fervency of inward religion in the great mass of the worshippers; but I am persuaded there are few christians in the world in these days, who like the Doctor, would dare to lay the blame on the word of God to "which they confine all their songs." The most charitable observer, who attends the worship of those congregations, that have adopted new systems of psalmody, might be tempted to suspect that more attention is paid to the externals of worship, the tuning of the voice, and the harmony of sounds, than to the internal melody of the heart; and perhaps when there is a strong degree of excitement in their devotion, he might be tempted to attribute a part of it to enthusiasm, and to assert that one great occasion of the evil arose from the matter and words of their song of praise: but still, although his opinion might be wrong, he would not be guilty of disrespect to the word of God. Yet Dr. W. boldly announces his conviction "that one great occasion of the dull indifference and the negligent and thoughtless air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly when the Psalm is on their lips, arises from the matter and words" of the Scripture of truth!

It is true we are not to use the word of God as a charm or talisman from which we hope certain effects will be produced in our minds. The mere words of scripture will be of no more benefit to us than the words of a man, unless we have some understanding of the sense and meaning, and are able to make some application of them to our own hearts; we are not disposed to deny that some parts of the word of God were more applicable in their literal sense to the church in ancient days, than they are to the church in the present time; but still we believe with the apostles *that all scripture is given by inspiration, of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*: and we infer that every ordinance of the ancient dispensation, however it may appear at first inapplicable, has nevertheless a spiritual meaning from which we may derive spiritual benefit provided we understand it; the Psalms of David frequently recur to the forms of worship under the Old Testament; but if our minds are spiritually exercised we shall always find a substantial spiritual sense, which will both enlighten the understanding and warm the heart. In the Psalms of David we sing the deliverance of the Israelites from their troubles, and the judgments executed on them for their sins, but when we reflect that the church of God is one; that the christian church is the very same which existed in the days of Moses and of Joshua, in Egypt and in Canaan; that the history of God's dealing with his people in the ancient ages is also the history of his dealings in latter ages; and, that every individual may find in his own experience something to correspond with every sentiment and every expression, which relates to that body of which he is a member we can scarcely avoid conviction that the Psalms of scripture contain not only the true offering of praise, which ought to be rendered up to God continually; but that they contain the true spiritual food for our souls, which cannot be derived from the inventions of men.— Hence it is plain, that if we do not derive benefit from the songs of inspiration, the fault must be in ourselves. “The dull indifference and the negligent and thoughtless air, that sits upon our faces while the Psalm is on our lips,” ought to be a matter of humiliation and godly sorrow; but let us be aware of charging our sins upon the word of God.

Dr. W. seems never to have taken the subject into consideration, that the authority of God is as necessary for the regulation of our worship under the New Testament as under the Old: & that we must be able to put our finger on some part of scripture,

ly approaches to blasphemy against the spirit of inspiration, ~~that~~ every man who truly reveres the word of God, must shudder at the horrid presumption to which Dr. W. and his followers have been led. Nothing but ignorance can save them from that sin which is beyond the reach of pardon. Verily, if christians were rightly affected with this subject, their feelings would be similar to those of Ezra, when he came to Jerusalem and found that the priests and the Levites and the people had not separated themselves from the heathen around them; but had taken their daughters for wives, and had mingled in their abominations.— *When I heard this thing, said Ezra, I rent my garments and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.*

This is truly a painful subject and we shall pass over it as lightly as possible: The whole paragraph is so plainly founded on mistaken views of the Old Testament dispensation, that we fondly hope that no christian will now attempt to justify one line of it. None of the Psalms when rightly understood will be found to be “opposite to the spirit of the gospel;” none of them “foreign to the state of the New Testament,” none of them “widely different from the present circumstances of christians.” The truth is, that they express the very circumstances of the christian church at this time, and the particular circumstances of every christian. They express all the glories of the gospel not only in the “figures of Judaism;” but in the language which is most easily understood by the christian who is conversant with his bible. None of us need be afraid of having the “veil of Moses thrown over our hearts,” so long as we are enabled to behold, *with open face as in a glass*, the glory of our Lord by means of the New Testament scriptures; and see the splendor of his glory as it is reflected upon the Old Testament. Both these parts of the scripture equally reflect the glory of Jesus Christ upon the christian’s heart; and thus he is changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord. The new commandment of loving our enemies is by no means contrary to the imprecatory parts of the Psalms. The Redeemer himself when he was upon the earth used as strong language on this subject as was used by David. *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? What is the language of Paul on this subject? If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. What is the language of the saints of God expressed in the Revelations? After*

these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, *alleluia*; salvation and honor and glory and power unto the Lord, our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and hath avenged the blood of his saints at her hand. XIX. 42. The true christian when he is engaged in the exercise of devotion never indulges a spiteful or revengeful thought against those who have injured him. On the contrary he blesses them that curse him, and prays for those that spitefully use him and persecute him; but at the same time he fully acquiesces and rejoices in the righteous judgments of God. The enemies of the christian are the enemies of Jesus Christ, and when we pray for the coming of his kingdom, we embrace the principle of all the imprecations of the Psalms of David. Every true servant of God prays for the days of vengeance; not from selfish considerations, not that he may exult in the misery and degradation of those who have injured him, but that righteousness and truth may prevail and be exalted. He knows that Jehovah is the God of vengeance, and that he will be glorified by the final condemnation of his enemies, as well as by the final salvation of his people; and when he prays for that salvation, all the means of its accomplishment are also included in his petitions. No line in the psalms of scripture, so peculiarly belongs to "one action or hour in the life of David or of Asaph," that it cannot when properly applied, belong to many actions and hours in the life of every christian: and if we sing with the spirit and understanding, our consciences need never be affrighted lest we speak a falsehood to God when we address him in the language of his word. It is truly lamentable to read such sentiments from the pen of one who has written so well, and so much like a christian on many of the subjects of christianity. Such sentiments from Tindal or Paine or Voltaire, would be comparatively inoffensive; but when one who has long been considered as one of the best and warmest friends of the gospel of Christ, is heard to utter such horrible sentiments, we can scarcely avoid feeling as if truth had forsaken the earth: and the impression is still more painful when we see his errors followed and vindicated by the descendants of men who in former ages were the most strenuous advocates of the truth. Their consciences are affrighted! They are afraid lest they should speak a falsehood unto God, when they offer up to him the very matter and words which he has provided for their praises, but they are not afraid to offer up to him most glaring nonsense and falsehoods which they have a-

dopted, and made their own, by receiving the effusions of weak and erring mortals like themselves!

It is a fact, which no man of understanding will deny, that there is much of both nonsense and falsehoods in those human compositions, which in this age of the world disgrace the praises of the church; and the Psalms and Hymns of Dr. W. are not more free from such faults than other human compositions; and yet they will dare to go into the presence of their maker and offer an unclean sacrifice in preference to the pure offering which God has provided. The contracted limits of this little work will not admit, that we should enter largely upon the proofs of this position; nor is it necessary that we should; for sundry writers have already brought forward and exposed a sufficient number of the errors of Dr. W.'s imitations; to show clearly both nonsense and falsehoods. We shall however take the liberty of adding to the list, one which does not appear to have been publicly noticed, although by no means the least offensive and dangerous:

The CIX. is one of those psalms which the Dr. reprobates as being very contrary to the "New commandment of loving our enemies," he therefore puts in the room of it, one of his own, which he entitles, "*Love to Enemies after the example of Christ:*" plainly intimating that even an imitation of this psalm would have been improper. In verse fourth he says:

" Their malice raged without a cause,
Yet with his dying breath,
He prayed for murderers on his cross,
And blessed his foes in death."

Here the Dr. evidently refers to the prayer which was offered by our Lord when the Roman soldiers had nailed him to the cross, just before *they parted his garments and cast lots.*—*Father, said he, forgive them for they know not what they do.* Luke XXIII. 34. He supposes that this prayer was offered up for his murderers the Jews. But this is evidently far from the truth; the Dr. tells us himself in one of his hymns

" It sha'n't be said that praying breath
Was ever spent in vain."

Surely then God would honor the dying breath of his only begotten son, when it was spent in prayer for his murderers; and those "foes whom he blessed in death" are blessed forever. If this doctrine were true it would certainly bring great consolation to all murderers; for the murderers of Jesus Christ were certainly the greatest sinners that ever disgraced the earth. If they were saved who shall be lost? *If he that openeth and no man shutteth,*

has opened the door of mercy for them, then what criminal need fear the punishment of the second death? What sentiment can declare universal salvation more openly and plainly than this? If this is true, then the unpardonable sin may be pardoned, and the worst enemies of Jesus Christ have as good a right to expect mercy as his best friends. But this is only the language of Dr. W.'s imitation. The language of God's word, in the faithful version of the psalms, concerning such characters is very different:

As he in cursing pleasure took,
So let it to him fall;
As he delighted not to bless,
So bless him not at all.
As cursing he like clothes put on,
Into his bowels so,
Like water, and into his bones
Like oil, down let it go.

This was the end, and this is now the condition of the murderers of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the false sentiment which Dr. W. puts into the mouths of his followers, and which they still dare to offer up to God in his church.

It was not for the Jews the Redeemer prayed, but for those who were employed as the executioners of the unrighteous sentence. They were not murderers unless the executioners of an unjust sentence should always be called murderers. It is true they committed a great sin. No man could be innocent who laid violent hands on the Son of God. But they acted in obedience to their commander, and *they knew not what they did*. If they had done it with knowledge, they would have been beyond the reach of pardon. But their sin of ignorance was forgiven, and they were saved. Hence it is said concerning them, and all such enemies, who are brought to repentance, *they shall look upon him whom they have pierced*.

It may perhaps be proper for us in this place to notice the insulting manner in which the Dr. treats the *sweet Psalmist of Israel* in his imitation of the CXIX Psalm, and in the note which he sets before it. He says, "I have collected and disposed the most useful verses of this psalm under eighteen different heads and formed a divine song upon each of them. But the verses are much transposed to attain some degree of connection." This Psalm, as it stands in the original Hebrew, is one of the most artful and elegant, and perhaps one of the most labored compositions that ever appeared in any language. It is divided into twenty-two parts, and each part contains eight stanzas or vers-

ses, which begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It was probably composed when the psalmist was far advanced in years, and matured in divine knowledge and wisdom; for it contains lessons of practical religion which have not only never been equalled by the pen of man, but are, in fact, the sum and substance of all true religion, as it exists in the heart and experience of the aged christian. The man who has spent a long life in the study of the scriptures and the practice of christianity, will here find, day by day, new lessons of spiritual wisdom to regulate his heart and affections. Men possessed of the most exalted talents,—men the most highly endowed with every christian virtue, have not been ashamed to read and study and meditate upon this psalm to the end of their lives; and confess that they always found something in it new and delightful. But Dr. W. treats it as a piece of crude composition, deficient in connexion and precision; and as if some of it were useless or unintelligible to the christian church, and therefore not fit to be sung in the praises of God. He tells us further; “in some places among the words *law, commands, judgments testimonies, I have used, gospel, word, grace, truth, promises, &c.* as more agreeable to the New Testament, and the common language of christians, and it equally answers the design of the psalmist which was to recommend the Holy Scriptures.” Men do not generally see the poison which is contained in the words of the Dr. and perhaps he did not see it himself: but we can now feel the effects of it to our sorrow. It is a fact that the world has learned to set one part of the scripture in opposition to the other; and while they lavish all their praise, and all their religious thoughts and meditations on the New Testament, they treat the Old Testament scripture as a garment that is worn out and decayed. This was certainly not the design of the psalmist, and it certainly was not the design of our Lord Jesus Christ when he said to the Jews, *search the scripture, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me.* The Redeemer evidently meant the Old Testament scriptures, for the New Testament was not then in existence. In fact the New Testament is merely a developement of truths which are substantially contained in the Old; and therefore the intelligent christian always searches in one for the truths contained in the other; and thus *the man of God becomes perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work.* But the effect of Dr. W.’s productions, has been, to confine the attention of the world to the New Testament, without leading them at all to search and investigate the

Old Testament scriptures: and hence we may date the origin of that light, and superficial, and fluctuating kind of religion which we have among us. It is founded on no investigation of the scriptures; it has no stability but prejudice; and when this is shaken and removed, we shall see the accomplishment of the second vial of the wrath of God. *The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and the sea became as the blood of a dead man,* and every living soul died in the sea. This will be found in the present and the succeeding age to be an enormous evil which will swallow up all the imaginary spiritual benefits, derived from the efforts of Dr. W. to amend the Psalms of David.

In order "to attain some degree of connection" he has mangled, and torn, and dislocated almost every joint of this divine composition. We talk of a language being murdered when the writer or speaker uses the words of it in a manner which is highly improper. But Dr. W. has committed murder in a much more criminal sense, for he has torn this psalm limb from limb; and put it together in such a bungling manner, that not only its beauty and elegance, but the sense of it is in a great measure lost. He has the vanity and presumption to say, that he has collected and disposed the most useful verses of it, under "eighteen different heads, and formed a divine song upon each of them." Some of the verses he considered as useless, and threw them aside; and the rest, he altered and arranged according to his own fancy and this he calls "forming a divine song upon each of them." It is charitably hoped that Dr. W. did not believe that this psalm was given by the inspiration of God; for if he had believed it, the most ingenious of his advocates will not be able to clear him of the charge of blasphemy against the spirit of inspiration.

It seems indeed plainly to have been the opinion of Dr. W. that David was permitted to intermingle his own particular feelings and circumstances with the word of God, so that sometimes he speaks the mind of the spirit of God, and at other times he speaks his own heart. But if he had seen the consequence of this sentiment, there is little doubt he would have rejected it with abhorrence. If some parts of the book of Psalms are inspired and some parts merely human; if there are some lines in it in which David speaks his own heart and not the mind of the spirit, may not the same thing be said of every writer both of the Old and New Testament? Who then shall undertake to tell us what is human and what is divine? Such a doctrine would make the bible of no more authority than any other book.

We might take such parts as we suppose to suit our own case, and throw the rest aside. It will not mend the matter in the least to say that God gave a book of psalms to the Jews; but he has given us leave to fabricate one or two or as many as we please for ourselves. This supposition is not only without any support from the sacred volume; but it supposes that the prophets spoke their own sentiments to subserve a temporary purpose; that David made the book of Psalms merely for the age in which he lived, or to be used until the coming of the Messiah: and then either to be thrown aside, or altered and amended by some other better poet; so that it might last another age; and thus new systems of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs should be introduced from generation to generation.

This statement is flatly contradicted by the apostle Peter.—*Knowing this first, says the apostle, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* It is evident the book of Psalms is a system of prophecy, directing us to Jesus Christ, and unfolding the blessings and the glory of the gospel. It was not therefore given by the will of man; it was not made to subserve a temporary purpose, but to continue in the church as the system of inspired songs of praise; and to be used as such by the worshippers of God until the end of time.

What horrible delusion and degradation of the worship of God has this false sentiment introduced among mankind! The opinion has now become current that one kind of religion is as good as another, and that any other system of psalmody is as acceptable to God as that which he has given us in his word. Indeed this divine system is not relished, and can scarcely be borne for this very reason stated by Dr. W. As long as they can apply the words to their own case, or their own frames and feelings which are frequently very different from the christian feelings, then their lips and their hearts run on sweetly together: but when the word of God teaches other sentiments and other feelings, it becomes disgusting and must be exchanged for something more pleasing. There are no limits to this kind of extravagance. One system of praise must be exchanged for another, and one system of religion for another, until invention itself is exhausted: Dr. W. with all his poetical powers has now become antiquated among many religious societies. His imitation is left to slumber in silence, while some more fortunate poet is honored as the fabricator of their praises. Again his hor-

or fails, and the laurel is bestowed on some other adventurer. Sic transit gloria mundi! thus we see how *the wisdom of the wise man perishes, and the understanding of the prudent is hid*.

Dr. W. confesses that he yielded to the importunate and repeated requests of many ministers and private christians, to devote his hours of leisure to this service, and that still it was far from his intention "to lay aside the book of Psalms in public worship;" and then he launches forth into an encomium upon it, but in a moment afterwards he displays the corruptness of his sentiments by saying it must be acknowledged that there are ~~4~~ thousand lines in it, "which were not made for a church in our days to assume as its own." No doubt he gives us two or three of the thousand lines in his quotation from the LXIX Psalm:

"Add thou iniquity unto
Their former wickedness:
And do not let them come at all
Into thy righteousness."

But yet these very sentiments are assumed by the apostles as their own when they quote the words of this Psalm as fulfilled in Judas the traitor. *Men and brethren, says Peter, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke by the mouth of David concerning Judas who was guide to them that took Jesus.—Let his habitation be desolate, let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.* If therefore the apostles assume these lines as their own, we ought to have no hesitation in singing them to the praise of God. It might also have been easily shown, if he had been so good as to have pointed out the remainder of the thousand lines, that there is as little reason for rejecting them as for rejecting those which he has quoted. There is no part of the Psalms which the church in any age, may not assume as its own. "The deficiencies of light and glory" which have been supplied by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, were intended to illuminate and not to shine in opposition to the sentiments of the *Sweet Psalmist of Israel*. All spiritual songs which are composed for this purpose will be like ignis fatuus that glares for a moment and is then lost in the gloom of night. The vain glory and presumption of Dr. W. are not the less obvious although he disclaims them. The attempt he has made would have been vain-glorious and presuming although he had been in every sense of the word a greater character than the greatest of the Jewish prophets. It is not the greatness of the prophet, nor his clearness of evangelical knowl-

edge that gives him a right to make Psalms for the church of God. If Isaiah or John the Baptist had undertaken such a work without the divine authority, would it not have been vain-glorious and presuming? Did the prophets or apostles ever introduce their own inventions into the worship of God? Had they not a **THUS SAITH THE LORD**, for every change that they made even in the outward forms of worship? and shall a mere uninspired man at the solicitation of his friends, and because he possesses a certain portion of poetical talents, dare to put his effusions in the room of that system of psalmody which God has given to his church? The man who acts in this manner does in fact arrogate to himself one of the essential prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is he alone that has the authority, and we are sure he never sent his spirit to inspire Dr. W. to write sentiments exactly opposite to his former revelations, which he has given in the scriptures of truth. This is a tremendous consideration. Let those who follow this vainglorious presumer, look at the precipice on which they are standing. The ground has begun to moulder away under their feet, and if they do not speedily quit their situation, their fall will be deep and dreadful.

Although Dr. W. professed such high estimation, and such exalted sentiments of regard for the book of Psalms; and notwithstanding his declaration, that "it was far from his thoughts to lay it aside in public worship;" yet like many professors in the present time, there seems to be a total inconsistency between his professions and his actions. He certainly acted as if it was his intention to lay aside the Psalms of scripture entirely. He first formed an "imitation" of the book, a kind of resemblance or image of it, and introduced this resemblance or image into the churches in the room of the original. For certainly the Psalms of Dr. W. are not the same as the Psalms of scripture, when he himself declares that "there are a thousand lines in them that were not made for a church in our days to assume as its own." The truth is, therefore, that Dr. W. and his followers have laid aside the book of Psalms in public worship, even although they should never use any other compositions but his "Imitation." But he has made the inconsistency still more glaring by introducing into the churches a number of compositions entirely his own. In these effusions which he calls "Hymns and Spiritual Songs," it is very plain, notwithstanding all his professed humility, and his denial of vain glory and presumption, that he sets *himself* up as the standard of imitation for

the churches of Christ. He says he has copied "the frequent tempers and changes of our spirit, and the conditions of our life." He has "expressed the breathings of our piety according to the variety of our passions, our love, our fear, our hope, our desire, our sorrow, and our joy, as they are refined into devotion, and act under the influence and conduct of the blessed Spirit." But where was the original from which this "copy" was taken? Was it not in the mind of the Dr. himself? He has copied merely what he supposed to be "the frequent tempers and changes of our spirit and the breathings of our piety," &c.; and it is just such a copy as might be expected. It displays nothing so much as his own vanity and presumption. Who authorized Dr. W. to draw a copy of the "breathings of our piety," and then to present this copy for us to imitate in our devotions, instead of the original which God has given? If Moses had not been satisfied with the engraving of the law of God on the tables of stone, because he found something in it which did not exactly suit his taste; and had therefore made an imitation leaving out things which did not please him: and if he had added to this imitation two other tables of his own, he would have acted precisely on the principles of Dr. W. But would not God have said to him, *who hath required this at your hand?* and would not every man have charged him with vain glory and presumption? This is a very different case from a minister of the gospel in the pulpit, or a writer in a printed book exhibiting what he believes to be the breathings of christian piety, &c.; for we never think of taking his thoughts and presenting them to God as the offering of our praise. But Dr. W. has dared to give to the churches his copy of devotion, that they may present it to God. I ask then have we not great reason to suspect, from his egregious vanity, that his copy is not a faithful portrait of the original, or that he had not so much knowledge of the original as to make a true copy of it? And, will not the Redeemer say to all such as worship by this copy, *In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

He says "there are various short patterns of christian psalmody described in the Revelations." Such as *Worthy is the lamb that was slain*, &c. But here the Dr.'s enthusiasm has led him, like the famous Don Quixote, to mistake a wind-mill for a giant. There is no pattern of christian psalmody described in the book of Revelation. Every one knows that the whole book is symbolical, and every particular revelation is made in the language of symbols. In certain circumstances the whole

church is represented as pouring forth one spontaneous acclamation of praise to the *lamb that was slain*, &c. and this the Dr. supposas to be a pattern of christian psalmody. But if there was any argument to be drawn from this representation, it would certainly conclude in favor of having no pattern at all; and that every one should sing the praises of God in such language as might occur to himself at the moment. Then we should, every Sabbath, have a jargon of words and sounds infinitely worse than that which the apostle reprobates when he says, *If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, & all speak with tongues; & there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?* 1. Cor. XIV. 23.

This argument seems to have some affinity with that drawn from the command to sing a *new song to the Lord*. From this it is inferred that we ought to sing the effusions of Dr. W. But if this is the meaning of the command, the compositions of Dr. W. ought long before this to have been laid aside; for that cannot be called a new song which was composed a hundred years ago. All this is ridiculous and mere trifling. Every Psalm in the book of God's inspiration is always new to the man whose understanding will be enlightened by the spirit of God. In proportion to his advancement in the knowledge of God, and of the plan and works of redemption; and in proportion to his own individual experience of the love of God, he will find the light of truth advancing and prevailing over the natural darkness of his mind; his heart will always be more and more warmed and animated, so that his song of praise will always be delightful and always new. Hence it is said of them who are represented in XIV. chapter of the book of Revelation, as standing with the lamb on mount Zion, and having his father's name written on their foreheads; that *they sang a new song, &c. and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.* This is the very period of the world in which this prophecy may be expected to be fulfilled.— But those who stand with the lamb, and sing this new song, and understand it, are not such as have forsaken the Psalms of scripture to follow the vain inventions of men. In fact the exercises of devotion recede from the truth in proportion as they recede from the Psalms of David. The fire of enthusiasm, has for many years, kept the christian world in a flame and concealed the light of true devotion from the understanding; but the flame has begun to subside and we are enabled in some degree to examine the effects it has produced. But amidst the

wide spread desolation, there is nothing perhaps more lamentable than the almost total ignorance of the inspired Psalms; and the blind prejudice which has been excited against them.— There is every reason to fear that multitudes who call themselves christians are forever unfitted for singing or for learning to sing that new song of the hundred and forty and four thousand; and that years and perhaps ages will be required to bring the churches back to that true taste, that purity, and that enlightened devotion, which existed in former times, before the worship began to be corrupted by these vain inventions.

The Dr. tells us “that he has avoided the more obscure and controverted points of christianity,” that “the contentions and distinguishing words of sects or parties are secluded;” that “if any expressions occur to the reader that savor of an opinion different from his own; yet he may observe that these are generally such as are capable of an extensive sense and may be used with a charitable latitude:” and to crown the whole he tells us that “where any *unpleasing* word is found, he that leads the worship may substitute a better.” This is charity with a witness. It is not indeed surprising, that the partizans of Dr. W. have been willing to keep his opinions from the eyes of the world: For certainly if this preface had been published with every edition of his poetical effusions, it would in some degree have abated the fervor of innovation. We should consider that this is his own account of his works, and of the principles which actuated his mind while he was engaged in composing them.— We would wish to exercise charity, and are disposed to give some credit to what has been currently reported, that these last poetical effusions of Dr. W. were rather the vagaries of the mind of a good old man, who was substantially a christian; but having embraced some erroneous opinions in the former part of his life, was left to partial and afterwards complete derangement of intellect as the chastisement for his follies. But whatever might have been his principles and habits of thinking in the former part of his life, he exhibits in this quotation a deplorable example of the corruption of the heart. In fact, he tells us in substance, if there be any meaning in his words, that his “Hymns and Spiritual Songs” are not designed to be a pure offering of truth and righteousness, but calculated for all sects, and all characters, that choose to offer up any kind of worship to the Almighty, whether they receive the truths of christianity or not:—that there is a charitable latitude in his expressions, that men of different opinions may use them, every one in his

own sense;—that even the clerk of the congregation, or any one that leads the worship, may substitute a better word, if any of the Dr.'s expressions should not happen to suit his fancy:—and to cap the climax of his absurdity [I had almost said blasphemy] he concludes the paragraph with “blessed be God we are not confined to the word of any man in our public solemnities.” When men will not be confined by the word of God, they will naturally run into every kind of extravagance. Error has generally small and almost imperceptible beginnings; but they who are led by its influence, are incapable of perceiving it, even when it becomes palpable. These opinions of Dr. W. absurd and profane as they are, seem to be currently received among christians at the present moment. In their zeal for making proselytes they lose sight of honesty and candor: and in their unbounded charity, the truth passes without regard. But let them tremble at the words of insulted Heaven:—*Shall I not visit for these things, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this.* We may well say with the prophet:—*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: And what will ye do in the end thereof.*

Why should what is provided for public singing be so contrived as “to give to sincere consciences as little disturbance as possible,” if those consciences are erroneous? If a man has embraced some false and corrupt opinions in religion is it right, is it according to the will of God, that a system of religious songs should be provided in which the words are capable of an extensive sense and may be used with a charitable latitude, so that such a man might conscientiously join in worship with one whose opinions are correct? As we are naturally inclined to error rather than truth, is there not a greater probability that by such an unholy union, the leaven of falsehood might operate more effectually than truth, especially when it is concealed under an ambiguous expression? If the words provided for public singing ought to be such as can be used in this extensive sense and charitable latitude, so as to give as little disturbance as possible to sincere though erroneous consciences; might not what is provided for public preaching and prayer be also contrived as to have a double meaning; and thus two or more classes of religious characters might be suited with sentiments according to their feelings? This truly is an admirable contrivance, and Dr. W. ought to have had a patent for it; for there is reason to fear that many in this age practice it upon the same prin-

ciple without having made any suitable acknowledgment for the invention. But the man who acts under the influence of such principles; although he may be well calculated for making proselytes; yet he can never bear the testimony of a *true and faithful witness*. It is this very policy which the Redeemer reprobates, when he says *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte: and when he is made, ye make him ten-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.* It is a fact which must strike every one that has reflected on the subject, that in all heresies, and all departures from the truth of the gospel, the man that first divulged the erroneous sentiment, was a much better character than the mass of his followers. We have no reason to say that Dr. W. carried this false sentiment any further than what he "provided for public singing;" but we know that many of his followers are not so scrupulous. They will both preach and pray, so as not to give much disturbance to "sincere consciences" provided they have a hope that their congregations will be increased by it. It would be well for us ministers of the gospel, to reflect occasionally on the words of Paul. *Do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ.*

It is true that Dr. W. possessed a natural and highly cultivated talent for poetical composition; and if he had exercised that talent in versifying the Psalms of Scripture,—in translating the elegance of the inspired psalmist into English verse, his name would have stood to the latest ages on the list of benefactors to the church of God. But as the case now stands, it is certain he has been the instrument of diffusing among mankind, a taste and disposition which is altogether at variance with the spirit of true religion. The translators or versifiers of the system of psalmody usually called "Rouse's version of David's Psalms," evidently did not consider ease and elegance of diction, or smoothness of sound, to be an object of much importance. Their grand design was to give the sense and sentiments of the inspired Psalms. They acted on the very contrary principle to that of Dr. W. They never thought of using words that might be "capable of an extensive sense and charitable latitude, that they might give to sincere consciences as little disturbance as possible." In truth they seem to have paid very little attention to the graces of composition. Hence it is not at all surprising that the compositions of Dr. W. should have been received with acclamation by the thoughtless world; because his

great object was to please them, and give as little disturbance as possible to their consciences. He has therefore been no benefactor to the church. His compositions have produced a kind of morbid religious feeling, which, although it may have some symptoms of spiritual health, will nevertheless miserably deceive those who indulge in it. While they think they are making great advances in the divine life, and his words "compose their spirits to seriousness, and allure them to a sweet retirement within themselves;" they are indulging a dream of enthusiasm, a vain image of devotion, which *God will despise*.

What else can be expected from following the man, who with vanity almost unparalleled, and only equalled by his presumption, can gravely come forward and tell us that he has changed the "Levitical ceremonies and Hebrew forms of speech into the worship of the gospel; that what would not bear such an alteration he omitted and laid aside: That he would rejoice to see a good part of the book of Psalms thus fitted for the use of our churches, and David converted into a christian." Certainly there could not be a stronger evidence of the unfitness of Dr. W. to be a leader in any kind of devotion, than the expression of such sentiments: for they manifestly show either a partial derangement of intellect or such vanity and presumption as are entirely inconsistent with the humble spirit of christianity. If David needed conversion before he could become such a christian as Dr. W. there is every reason to fear that the Dr.'s christianity was not according to the mind and will of God. We know that David was a man according to God's own heart, & that *the spirit of the Lord spake by him*, even when he indited those very lines which the Dr. despises & throws aside as not fit to be used: We know, from his own confession, that his christianity was different from the religion of David; we are therefore irresistibly led to the conclusion, that Dr. W.'s compositions are not a true model of christian devotion. What then I again ask can be expected, but that God will despise the vain imaginations of those who forsake his word, and form their devotional feelings from this false model?

We shall take notice of another exceptionable passage in this preface, and shall then close our observations. He tells us that he has "prepared the third part of his Hymns and Spiritual Songs only, for the celebration of the Lord's supper, that in imitation of our blessed Saviour, we might sing an hymn after we have partaken of the bread and wine." For this part he seems to draw his authority from Mark XIV. 26. *When they had sung*

an hymn they went out unto the mount of Olives. He must have thought that the Redeemer or some of his disciples had been exercising their talents in poetry, and had produced an hymn for the occasion; and therefore he had a right, as the poet laureat of the church in his time, to exercise his talents in producing hymns for every such occasion after his days. With all his learning the Dr. seems to have been ignorant that it has been, and still is the custom among the Jews, when they have eaten the passover, to sing or chaunt one of the Psalms of David, in the latter part of the book, beginning with Alleluia, or *praise ye the Lord.* It was evidently one of these that Christ and his Apostles sang and not an extemporaneous effusion, or a hymn produced for the occasion according to the custom of modern times. It is not for a moment to be supposed that the Redeemer would reject his own Psalms, which all relate to him, and which are suited to every occasion of christian worship; and that he would establish a precedent, which would have put it in the power of every poetaster of ancient and modern times, to impose his worthless or profane productions on the church, as hymns suited to those solemn occasions, in which they commemorate the dying love of their Lord.

If I am not very much mistaken, the modern idea attached to the word hymn, as a kind of poetical composition in some respects different from a Psalm, was in a great degree derived from the productions of Dr. W. and some of his cotemporaries. According to the Dr. and other writers of the same stamp, a Psalm seems to be a kind of sacred poetry formed after the pattern of the Psalms of David; and hymns are a kind of composition suitable to be sung on certain occasions, and in particular circumstances. But this is quite an arbitrary, and altogether a modern idea. The Latin word *carmen*, found in that celebrated sentence in Pliny, which has been quoted as a triumphant argument, that hymns were in use among the primitive christians, signifies any kind of Ode or Poem. No doubt the Psalms of David were the *carmina* or hymns which they sang to Jesus Christ as God. There were no Psalm-makers in those days among the persecuted christians to alter and amend the word of God and render it suitable for christian devotion. Nor is there the smallest reason to believe that the orthodox believers departed on any occasion from the Psalms of Scripture to sing a hymn of human composition. It is however evident, from the manner in which the Psalms are quoted by the apostle Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews, that the primitive christians understood

them as relating to the Messiah. He never stops to inform them that the XLV and the CII. which he quotes in the first chapter, are designed to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. They had not lost this knowledge in the days of Pliny, nor did they wish to conceal the truth, that Jesus Christ received divine honors in their praises. It was therefore very natural for Pliny to give this information to his master, that the christians were accustomed to assemble and to sing a (*carmen*) hymn to Christ as God; although they sang nothing but the Psalms of David. The terms, Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, which are mentioned by Paul are only an amplification of the varieties of sacred poetry which are found in the book of Psalms. There is just about as much difference in the ideas conveyed by these words as there is in the words iniquity, transgression, and sin, which are sometimes found in the Old Testament. No one seems at a loss to understand the general meaning of these words, although it might be difficult to distinguish them severally. We find the Hebrew word MIZMOR, the most frequent of the titles of the Psalms, and this word has exactly the same signification as the Latin word *Carmen*, viz: any highly finished poetical composition. We find also the word SHIER which signifies a *song*, and SHIER MIZMOR, which may be rendered a *highly finished song*. Some are entitled MASCHIL, which means, *giving wisdom*; some MIGHTAM, which means *golden*, &c. but they are all classed under the general term TEHILLIM, psalms or praises. Thus we see that the distinction which Dr. W. has thought proper to make between Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs, is entirely his own invention, and has no foundation in the original meaning of the words.

We shall now take leave of the Dr. and his compositions, as the particular subject of our criticism, and proceed to make a few general

REMARKS.

I. OUR stated and regular exercises of public devotion consist in praise and prayer, and the preaching of the word. The two latter must always vary their form according to circumstances. The public instruction of the gospel must always be suited to the circumstances of the hearers, and therefore the form of the words must be varied in every discourse. The same observations may be made with regard to prayer. Our circum-

stances and wants are perpetually varying and the forms of our petitions should be varied accordingly. But as it is the duty of every preacher to premeditate his subject, and even to clothe it in some form before he presents it to his audience; so it may be very proper for us also to premeditate the subject of our prayer. Hence forms of prayer may be useful in certain circumstances, to assist us in our devotions, especially when we are young and inexperienced. But those who confine themselves always to particular forms of prayer, whether ministers of the gospel, or private christians, act as absurdly as if they were always to preach or to hear a certain form of sermons: Hence there is no form of prayer given for our imitation in the whole scriptures. It is very evident that the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples was not intended as a form to be used always as it stands in the Bible. It was intended to show us how to pray, and what things we should ask. It contains the substance of all the petitions which are agreeable to the will of God. But when the Redeemer prescribed this prayer, he certainly did not intend to give any man or body of men the authority to prescribe forms of prayer for the churches. They may be profitably used in some cases as hand-maids to devotion, but when they usurp the place of the mistress they stand upon the same footing of the other inventions of man. They are an infringement of the prerogatives of Jesus Christ. Hence the prayers of the prophets and apostles which are recorded in the divine word, are all of them varied according to their circumstances, and none of them intended as forms for our imitation.

But the case is very different with respect to our praises — Here a form is absolutely necessary. We are all commanded *to sing aloud to God—to make a joyful noise to him—to sing forth the honor of his name, &c.* As therefore there is a necessity for a form of praise; so he has given the form in his word; and has given no authority to any man to alter or amend it. This then is one of the high prerogatives which our Lord Jesus Christ has reserved to himself. If he had thought proper to make any alterations or amendments in order to render the Psalms of David more suitable to the present state of the church, we have no reason to think that he would have left this important work unfinished when he departed from the earth. He would have inspired some of his apostles to write a system of Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the times of the New Testament. But as we do not find a word or syllable on this subject

in the whole scriptures of truth, we are bound to believe that no such authority is given, and that no such thing is necessary.

It is evident that the frequent acclamations of praise, which are found in the book of Revelation, were not intended as patterns of psalmody. They represent the substance, but not the form of the praises of the church in these latter times of the gospel: and nothing is necessary but to have our minds enlightened by the knowledge contained in the New Testament to see the substance of all their praises in the Psalms of David.— Compare for example the XCVIII Psalm with the XV chapter of the book of Revelation. The Psalmist exclaims: *The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.* The church exclaims: *who shall not fear and glorify thy name; for thou only art holy? for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.* If it should be asked why do they not use the Psalms of David, that the argument might have been conclusive in their favor, we answer:—The book of Revelation is all written in the language of symbols, and is consequently intended to express the substance and not the form of words in which the praises of God are to be sung. It is enough that we are told *they sang the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb;* which are nothing else than the songs of Zion found in the book of Psalms. Besides the very sentiments here used are at variance with the modern Hymn books. The great subject is the judgments of God, & vengeance executed on his enemies. This was the great object of the prayers of the saints, and it is here represented as the cause of their praises. What system of praise, but the book of inspiration, can teach us how to pray for the judgments of God, upon the world, and how to praise him when those judgments are manifest? It is therefore the sentiments of the book of Psalms which are here put into the mouth of the church by the spirit of God. They and they alone shall be sung by the christian church in ages to come.

II. If Jesus Christ did not think proper to alter this formula of praise—if the apostles did not presume to alter or amend it; it may not only be fairly presumed that the system is perfect and needs no amendment; but that all who have published new systems of Psalms or Hymns, or Spiritual Songs, with the intention of having them introduced into the churches, have, in fact, usurped one of the highest prerogatives of the Redeemer, and do expose themselves to the judgments contained in that admoni-

tion. Prov. XXX. 6. *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar*

Nothing but severe judgments will teach the presumptuous children of Adam to acknowledge the sovereignty, and to respect the institutions of the Almighty. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, dared to offer strange fire upon the altar of God, instead of that sacred fire which had been kindled at first by his own hand, and was still kept burning upon the altar; and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. The sentiments contained in the Psalms of David are the sacred fire which has proceeded from the Almighty, and which he has appointed with the agency of his Holy Spirit to kindle the sacred flame of devotion in our hearts; but if we use for this purpose the strange fire of the inventions of men, we have every reason to fear the judgments of his wrath. They may not indeed come in the same form of those which were executed on the sons of Aaron: for the judgments of these latter times are spiritual rather than temporal. It is said of the Redeemer that *he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked*. Spiritual judgments are much more to be dreaded than the most severe of those which are merely temporal. They are the death of the soul, for they harden the heart against the fear of God.—There is a kind of infatuation in the use of human psalmody, which renders those who have adopted it, deaf to the admonitions of truth. They will not attend to arguments which contradict their favorite practices. They are more and more hardened by every new reproof, until finally, God says *ye have chosen your own ways, and your soul hath delighted in your abominations: I will also choose your delusions*. Thus the Redeemer smites the earth with the rod of his mouth, and still they go on in disobedience from generation to generation, and many of them go down to the grave with *a lie in their right hand*.

But it is evident from the prophecies, and from an impartial and enlightened view of the moral aspect of the world at this moment, that, in this and the following age, we are to expect the consummation of the judgments of God which shall introduce the kingdom of the Messiah, so clearly and so frequently foretold by the prophets. We ourselves shall most probably witness the accomplishment of that prophecy, which in the ages that are past has exercised the faith of the church, and is still sung in her praises. *Our God shall come and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous*.

ous round about him. *He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth, that he may judge his people.* Ps. L. 3, 4. God has said, that he is a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. It is now three generations since this new kind of idolatry, this new mode offering strange fire, was first introduced into the church of God. We may therefore expect that in the days of vengeance that are now impending, an exemplary punishment will be inflicted on all those who have so long and so presumptuously rejected the ordinance of God to follow the traditions of men.— He has said and his word will soon be fulfilled: *They shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens which ye have chosen: for ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and like a garden in which there is no water.*

It is not to be supposed that God is now less jealous of his prerogatives, than he was when the prophecies were written. If it was then a sin to sacrifice in gardens, or under the shade of an oak, when the temple at Jerusalem was the appointed place of worship; it cannot be less a sin at the present time to forsake the established and authorized system of praise, which no one will dare to say has been abrogated by divine authority. We should still bear in mind that it is the authority of God to which we are to look, & not to the imaginary benefits which we think we are receiving; nor even to the imaginary honor which we think we are rendering to God. It was thus that Samuel confuted the vain reasonings of Saul, when he attempted to excuse his disobedience in not destroying the cattle of the Amalekites. *The people, said Saul, spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.* But Samuel said, *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams: for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hath rejected the word of the Lord, he hath even rejected thee from being king.* An obedient disposition is of more value in the sight of God, than the most costly sacrifices. All our worship, especially our praise, is to be considered in this light. We are to render unto God the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. These offerings may be pure and unacceptable both in respect of the matter and form. The matter or substance of our praise may be an abomination to God, while the outward form of it is such as he has commanded; but when we are guilt-

ty of disobedience in the form, the very substance is contaminated. Whether a sacrifice was offered at the temple, under an oak, or in a garden, the substance of it was the same; but when they did not bring it to the temple, it was wholly polluted; it was all a provocation and brought down a curse and not a blessing. So when the worshippers of God forsake his appointed ordinance in their sacrifice of praise, they may have many good sentiments to offer, and many good dispositions and affections, but the sin of disobedience, in one part of their worship, contaminates the whole. Saul did right when he destroyed the sinners, the Amalekites; but when he spared the sheep and the oxen, although it was intended for a sacrifice to God, his whole service was polluted and he became a transgressor. It may indeed be said that the cases are not paralel, that although God has allowed the Psalms of David to be sung in the churches, he has no where said, ye shall not sing any human compositions.— But we contend, that the very fact that God has given us a form for our praises, which he has not given us for our prayers, is tantamount to a prohibition of every human form of praise. It is enough for us to say that God has given no authority for such innovations.

But we further remark, that the neglect of any institution of God is contempt of his authority; and we cannot introduce human compositions into his praises, without setting aside at least for a time the Psalms he has given us in his word. It is true, we may have a disposition to use them on some other occasion, and not to lay them aside entirely; but we do at the time despise the word of God, when we prefer the compositions of men; and we do in fact despise the authority of God, when we forsake even for an hour or a day, the system which he has authorized, and sing any other compositions in his praises. This is no restriction of christian liberty. We have room enough for the widest range of all our faculties in meditating upon the truths of God, and the wonders of his love. This divine enclosure is as wide as the paradise of God in the Heavens. Here there is no want of any food which a spiritual man requires; for the whole fruit of the garden is ready at our hand, none of it is prohibited; we have access to every tree that is good for food, and pleasant to the eye, and agreeable to the taste. Why then should we wander out of the bounds of this garden of God, to seek after strange fruit, which, for any thing we know, may be the *grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorah*.

The preceding parts of this remark are made upon the sup-

position, that there are no perceptible errors in the human compositions which are offered up to God in his praises. But this is by no means the fact. There are perceptible errors in all the human systems of psalmody which have ever been published. The ignorant and short-sighted may not indeed be able to perceive them, without having them pointed out by some one who has his mind better exercised to discern between good and evil; but in proportion as they are scrutinized, their errors become the more perceptible; and in proportion as we exercise our minds in spiritual discernment, we shall be able to perceive more and more of them; and thus it will be found in the end, that errors have been multiplied in proportion as they have receded from the Psalms of Scripture; and many of them will be found at length to be masses of folly and deception. We have seen that the best of these human compositions does in fact contain errors in doctrine, and that those who use it do offer up to God falsehood in their praises; we have seen that the arguments which the author of it advances, to persuade the churches to adopt his system, are not only replete with falsehood, but with blasphemy; what then are we to expect from other writers, and other compositions, when there is still less of the truth and spirit of christianity? Those errors may indeed be a small consideration, when we read them in our closets or private retirement; for we then can reject what we do not approve: but the case is very different when we offer those profane things as a sacrifice to our Maker. We then adopt those erroneous sentiments and make them our own. They become the language of our hearts, and thus all our religious feelings and sentiments are contaminated. Thus vanity and weakness and folly and falsehood, are engrafted in the hearts of the worshippers of God. It ought not therefore to be a matter of surprise that such worship is called an abomination, and that God declares: *they are a people that provoke me to anger continually to my face,—that sacrifice in gardens and burn incense on altars of brick.—These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*

III. We are very liable to be led into errors by following the example of those whom we believe to be good and holy men; and our partialities in favor of such characters will naturally lead us to adopt some of their errors, and to draw the veil of charity over those which we cannot adopt. There have been many good moral characters, and apparently pious and holy men of almost every religious persuasion, men whose hearts were sincere, and whose intentions, as far as they knew their

own hearts were directed to the glory of their maker and the good of mankind. We do not hesitate to believe that there were many such characters among those *who sacrificed in gardens and burnt incense on altars of brick*. We know from the history of the times of our Lord, that some of the Pharisees were not only the most rigid moralists, and not only attended punctually to all the ordinances of religion; but practised fasting and prayer to an extent that is now seldom equalled, and perhaps not surpassed. Where shall we now find such a character as the Pharisee whose devotions our Lord describes in Luke XVIII. 11, 12. If ever men speak the language of the heart, it is in their silent addresses at the throne of God. We have no reason to doubt this man's sincerity. We cannot suppose that he intended to offer an insult to his Maker by telling him a wilful falsehood. His moral and religious character was no doubt among the first in the age and country in which he lived. If he lived in our days he would be esteemed a pious and holy man, and his example would have powerful influence. It cannot therefore be doubted that many of the ancient idolaters were eminent for morality and for many of those virtues which adorn the human character. They thought they were performing their duty when they worshipped in high places and in gardens, and they no doubt felt in their hearts, as our modern enthusiasts feel, that they had more piety and stronger devotional affections, than those who regarded every ordinance of God. Thus their names became celebrated for piety and holiness, and their errors were sanctified in the eyes of the world. Men reasoned then as they do now. They had an exalted opinion of their leaders, and they adopted their sentiments and practices without much examination. Thus the delusion made progress, multitudes were seduced from the pure worship of God, and led to destruction.

Such is always the manner in which Satan deceives the world by clothing himself in the robes of an angel of light. He is the wisest and most experienced of all politicians; and when he has any great object to promote by the agency of man, he always employs those who are best calculated for his purposes. Hence many of those who have been the seducers of mankind, and led thousands into error, have been themselves celebrated for moral excellence. Even Epicurus is said to have been rigid in his morals, and abstemious in the use of those sensual enjoyments in which his philosophy places the chief good for man. Nor can it be doubted that men of real goodness of heart, and actuated by the best motives, have sometimes been the unhappy instru-

ments of leading their fellow mortals into sin. But such men generally suffer in this world severe chastisements from the hand of God. Hence the instructors and the instructed have strong motives to be always on their guard against the devices of the evil one. We should follow no man farther than he follows the word of God. We should never suffer our judgment to be influenced by human authority. If we reverence the authority of God, he has promised to protect us from error, and lead us into truth. Hence the apostle says to all the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ:—*Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all the things. I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth*

IV. There is no error more at variance with the spirit of christianity than that false principle of charity which tempts us to think that God will be pleased with sincere worship, whether it be according to his commandments or not. We naturally indulge the hope that God will make allowance for our involuntary errors, and we charitably wish that he may extend the same allowance to others. But if God were to gratify such feelings, he would soon lose all honor and even respect among mankind. The very gospel of Jesus Christ, and the sufferings of his cross, would soon be esteemed as an idle tale. Why should we take the trouble to learn the true doctrines of the scriptures, and the ordinances of God's appointment; and why should we take the trouble to instruct our children in any particular doctrines and modes of worship, if nothing is necessary but a sincere conscience. This kind of imagination is totally opposite to the real character of Jehovah. *He is a jealous God*, and even visits *the sins of the fathers upon the children*, when they neglect his ordinances, from generation to generation. Jealousy is not an amiable quality when it is found in the human heart, because it leads to revenge and many violent passions which we cannot control: but still it is inseparable from love, where there is any reason to fear that the beloved object may transfer his affections. It is evident that God has great reason to be jealous of us. No church has ever continued pure for many succeeding generations. He may well say concerning us, as he said concerning the Israelites. *Of old times I have broken thy yoke and burst thy bonds; and thou saidst I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest playing the harlot.* God has a high regard for his own honor, and a strong affection for his people; and hence his jealousy is always excited by a want of regard for his authority. If he had given

as no commandments about the manner of offering our worship to him, nor told us what kind of worship would be the most acceptable; or if those commandments were hid from us, so that we had no opportunity of learning this part of our duty; then perhaps we might find some excuse in the consciousness that we attend to every duty according to our best judgment: but when we disregard God's instructions, and follow the traditions of our fathers, or what is most pleasing to ourselves, we certainly dishonor our Maker and excite his jealousy.

It is evident that the Christian world, in this age, have generally lost sight of this distinguishing trait in the divine character. If this were not the case, they would never indulge the thought that any kind of sincere worship will be acceptable to God.— One man presses to his bosom the image of Jesus Christ on the cross, and thinks his worship must be acceptable to God, because his devotional feelings are excited by it. Another casts aside the Psalms of Scripture, because he finds something in them so "Jewish and cloudy, that it darkens his sight of God the Saviour;"—he takes up the imitation of Dr. W. and his soul immediately kindles into divine love and heavenly rapture: then he concludes that this kind of worship is most acceptable to God. A third cannot be satisfied even with Dr. W.'s imitation, but must have hymns and spiritual songs entirely of human invention, and is always searching after something novel, because something of this kind is always needful to "compose his spirits to seriousness, and allure him to a sweet retirement within himself." A fourth cannot bear to even read those parts of the word of God which contain the doctrine of predestination. A fifth rejects the Old Testament Scriptures entirely, and lavishes all his love and all his encomiums upon the gospels.— Yet all these characters would be mightily offended if they were told that their devotions and their principles were an abomination in the sight of God. All have charity for one another, and all please themselves with the hope that their worship will be accepted!

But all these heterogenous opinions, and all the abominable practices which result from them, may be traced to that great spring of error, a want of reverence for the authority of God in his worship, and a paramount desire to please ourselves and our neighbors in our religious opinions and practices. It was this that induced the Israelites, in the times of old, to forsake the temple of God, an offer sacrifices on high places and in gardens and groves, until God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts, to follow all the abominations of the heathen. It was

this that led the primitive christian churches, in the first place, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and then to join with the idolators in their worship. It was by means of this principle, that the man of sin seated himself in the temple of God,—that Anti-christ arose into power and established his dominion over the christian world. From this has originated a large number of the various sects and denominations which now disfigure and disgrace the church of God: so that if we have not, like ancient Greece, our thirty thousand gods; yet we have almost as many different ways of offering up our worship to the only true God, and almost as many different views of his nature and character. In fact the idolatry of the present age differs only from the idolatry of the earlier ages, because the one was gross and corporeal, and the other somewhat refined and spiritual: but both originate from the same principle, and if there is any difference in the aggravation, our sin is the greater, *because light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness better than light, because their deeds are evil.*

But although the jealousy of God will not provoke him to cast away his church, because his promises shall never fail; yet he most assuredly will destroy the sinners out of it. He will not merely cut them off from the church, but from the earth, when he comes for vengeance in the latter days. The whole of the prophetic scriptures, and especially the Psalms, abound with declarations to this import. There can be no doubt in the mind of any one who has diligently investigated the prophecies, that the ages which shall immediately precede the millennial glory of the church, shall experience the most terrible judgments with which God ever visited the earth. *Then, says the prophet Daniel, there shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation to that same time.* It must also be obvious that this time is at hand, even at the doors. We know not what will be the nature of these judgments, but we know that they will fall chiefly on those with whom God is jealous. The declaration of John the Baptist concerning the coming of the Redeemer, will be fulfilled the second time. *His fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the granary; but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.*—This is the time when he is about to gather in his wheat. He will first enable his witnesses to proclaim the truth, in such a manner, that the minds of the world will be called to the subject. None shall have the excuse of involuntary ignorance. By the operation of his word and spirit, he will, in a certain degree, purify his church; he will exercise with severe chastise-

ments those of his people who have departed from the purity of his worship; and then he will commence the work of exterminating his enemies. *He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, for a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. Thus, Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness: and the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners, shall be together; and they that hate the Lord shall be consumed.*

V. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Psalms of David cannot with propriety be addressed "to the *lamb that was slain* and now lives, or to him who declares, *I am he that lieth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of Hell and Death.*" This is evidently the meaning of the CX. Psalm, where the Father is represented as saying to the Son, *sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool.* When the Apostle declares in the XLV. Psalm, *Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever*, it is plain that the address is made to Jesus Christ as arisen and ascended into the heavens. But the CII. Psalm, which the Apostle quotes, is still more to our purpose; because a superficial observer might read, and even sing this Psalm, and never suspect that it was addressed to Jesus Christ as the creator and governor of the universe. But the Apostle applies it in such a manner, as to show that the Hebrew church, both before and after the reception of the gospel, had been accustomed to apply this Psalm to the Messiah, as coming to build up the walls of Zion, and establish his kingdom over the world. If then this Psalm was addressed by the Apostle, and well understood by all the primitive churches to belong to the *lamb that was slain*, may we not infer that many others, nay almost all the Psalms, are to be addressed to him in the same manner. The design of Dr. W. in paraphrasing, and fitting the Psalms for the worship of the New Testament, was probably to direct the minds of christian worshippers to this subject. He probably intended to point out the Redeemer more clearly than he thought the Psalmist had done; and his compositions always leave the impression on the mind of an ignorant man, that the views of the Psalmist were dark and obscure; and that something more luminous than the Psalms of David is necessary to enable us to sing the praises of God with the understanding.

This kind of impression is very general in the Christian church at the present time, and it has sprung in a great degree from the use of Dr. W.'s compositions. It is commonly supposed that the Psalms of David are designed to celebrate the praises of the Messiah to come; but that another system is necessary to enable us to sing the praises of the Messiah, as having suffered and risen and being now seated on the right hand of God. But the intelligent christian has not to learn that the exaltation of Jesus Christ is the chief and prominent theme of the Psalms of David; and if Dr. W. and other intermeddlers, who have set up their wisdom against the wisdom of God, had been altogether silent, the world would have not been so ignorant of this part of divine revelation as they are at the present day. Why had the primitive christians more clearness, and more accurate knowledge on this subject than we, on whom eighteen centuries have poured their increasing light? If Paul, or any other writer, were to attempt in this age to prove the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ from the Psalms, it would be necessary in the first place to bring proofs to show that the Psalms were addressed to him. Hence we may see the great danger of leaning to our own understanding, and the incalculable evils which have been brought, and will be brought upon the church, by Dr. W. and his co-adjutors in the same unholy cause. Ages must elapse, the present and future generations must suffer terrible judgments, and multitudes be destroyed,

before men will learn to reverence the authority of God in his worship, and before this despised part of his word shall regain its standing in his church.

But the presumption of mankind generally grows with the decrease of knowledge. It is sometimes confidently asked "where is the authority for singing the Psalms of David in the New Testament church?" They might ask with the same propriety, "where is the authority of singing the praises of God as a part of his worship?" Those who in ancient times sacrificed and burnt incense in high places and in gardens and groves, might also have asked with the same propriety, "where was the authority for worshipping God in the temple at Jerusalem?" The proof for the one is as plain as the proof for the other. The fact that the temple of the Lord was erected in the city of Jerusalem, and that God had chosen that place to put his name there, was sufficient proof that it was the duty of every man to go to the temple and offer his sacrifices unto the Lord. So also the very fact that God has given the Psalms of David as the matter and form of the praises of his church, and the place which they occupy in the sacred volume, as being the only system of psalmody which was ever given by the spirit of inspiration, are sufficient arguments to convince any candid inquirer that no other system is necessary or proper to be used. But when we are so far advanced in christian knowledge and experience, as to be able to apply these divine sentiments to our spiritual condition, and to the state of the christian church, the proof then becomes as clear as the sun in the heavens. We are then enabled to behold the king in his beauty, and to exclaim with the Psalmist, *Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*

VI. The tendency of human compositions in the praises of God is to create pride and self-confidence. Indeed the very fact of casting aside God's own ordinance, and following an ordinance of man, shows a kind of self-sufficiency which is not easily reconciled with the humble spirit of the gospel, and this evil principle like all others of the same nature grows stronger and stronger by indulgence.—Hence it is not at all uncommon to hear the followers of Dr. W. comparing the moral character of their leader with that of the Psalmist, and then drawing the conclusion in favor of human compositions. The practical errors of David, and the speculative errors of Dr. W. are set in opposition as a kind of criterion by which the compositions are tested, and they find little difficulty in deciding in favor of the latter; because his moral character was fair and unspotted. If there was any force in this method of reasoning, it might easily be shown that the fair moral character of Dr. W. can only operate to render his writings the more dangerous: but the principle is vain & presumptuous. The sacred writers were nothing but the organs or instruments by which the spirit of God chose to communicate his truth; and the moral or immoral actions of David, have no more influence on his compositions than the pen with which he wrote them. The Psalms were written by different characters. David wrote only a part of them, but God is the author of them all: and they are fully sanctioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. How presumptuous then is the thought that these sacred compositions might be contaminated by the practical errors of David!

But when the abettors of human systems of psalmody find that this ground is no longer tenable, they fly to another resource, which only serves to show more plainly the powerful perdition of the self-righteous principle. They will tell you, "it is of no importance by whom the Hymn or Psalm was made, provided it expresses the feelings and sentiments of true devotion." Thus every one sets himself up as the judge, and makes his own feelings and sentiments the standard. He supposes himself to be so well acquainted with the scriptures, as to know what kind of praise, as well as what kind of prayers ought to be offered up to God. But this is a disposition which no one ought to indulge for a moment.—Our prayers and our praises are in this respect very dissimilar. In our prayers we know our own wants and desires, and we have only to consult the word of

God to learn whether they are agreeable to his will: but in our praises we are merely the component parts of a great body of worshippers, who are all supposed to unite, not only their hearts but their voices, in the expression of certain desires and sentiments which they offer up to God. There must therefore be a standard for this part of devotion. But no uninspired man has any right to claim the prerogative of furnishing such a standard. No uninspired man has a right to draw a copy of his own devotional feelings and sentiments, and present it as model for his neighbor to imitate. In fact, although a minister of the gospel, or the head of a family may choose what Psalm, or what part of a Psalm he judges suitable to the occasion, yet he has no right to omit a line or a verse in the middle of a Psalm: because by such omission, the sense may be altered, or some important sentiment of God's word may be cast aside. It is the duty of every member of the congregation to make the Psalms his particular study, and come prepared to join with his brethren in offering up the same sacrifice of praise. The judicatories of churches have no right to decide what Psalms shall be sung, or what kind of praises shall be offered to God. Their authority goes no farther than to say what version is the most agreeable to the original. But they ought to reflect that if they authorize erroneous sentiments to be sung in the worship of God, their sin is much greater than preaching false doctrines; and the effects are much more pernicious. If judicatories will assume an authority which is not committed to them, they ought at least to reflect that they are responsible for all the evil consequences, and if they are the means of inducing the worshippers under their care, to offer a polluted sacrifice to God, let them tremble at the consequences of their temerity. The worshippers who join in such sacrifices, are not indeed so much to be blamed; because they rely upon the wisdom and discretion of their teachers: but still they are all guilty of a much greater sin than the Israelites, when they offered *the blind and the lame in sacrifice* to God. They were no doubt actuated by a covetous disposition. They did not like to give the best of their flocks and their herds to be consumed on the altar: but here there is no such sacrifice required, no loss of property, no pain to be endured, we are only called to present to God the offering of praise which he has provided. Hence this boasted power of judging and deciding what kind of praise is agreeable to the scriptures, which every one who uses human compositions imagines himself to possess, will turn to his own condemnation; for the truth is, he seldom tries to exercise this power: but blindly follows his leaders, and sings any sentiments which they think proper to adopt.

It would be a curious as well as profitable employment, for any who had talents and leisure, to trace the operations of the principle of self-righteousness in the Christian Church, from the days of the Apostles until the present time. It would always be found that before this principle ventured to assume any tangible form, it had worked silently and secretly for years, and perhaps for ages, by leading the worshippers of God to prefer the inventions of man to his institutions. It was not for a mere punctilio that Paul contended, when he would not give place for an hour, to certain teachers who came from Jerusalem to Antioch, and taught the Gentiles that *unless they should be circumcised and keep the law of Moors, they could not be saved*. There was neither good nor evil in circumcision, if it were not imposed by authority and trusted in as righteousness. Paul himself circumcised Timothy, that he might not give offence to the Jews. But when the Judaizing christians attempted to impose it on the Gentiles, it was then an introduction of human inventions into the worship of God; and therefore it was resisted with all the authority and all the eloquence of the chief of the Apostles. This evil in the present case has only assumed a different and a more imposing form. The Judaizing teachers thought to honor Moses by imposing the Mosaic institutions on the church; the Psalm and Hymn makers of these latter days thought they were doing great honor to the Lord Jesus Christ by repeating his name so frequently

in their effusion; but as they had no authority from him, their compositions are mere works of supererogation, and are therefore calculated to foster the principle of self-righteousness.

But they have assumed a tremendous responsibility. Every minister who uses human compositions is responsible for the truth of every sentiment which he reads to his congregation as the subject of their praises: and those judicatories who have authorized the system of Dr. W. or any other human system, are responsible for the truth of all the sentiments contained in it. Now it is well known, and even admitted by many among themselves, that there are errors in all these systems. How then dare they sanction such sentiments by their authority? Truly there must be an awful reckoning when God calls them to account not only for the mischief they have occasioned in the church; but for the souls, who by their means, have been led to ruin.

VII. There is no subject dearer to the heart of every true christian than the union of the churches of Christ. He desires and longs for that period *when the watchmen of Israel shall lift up their voice, and with their voices sing together.*—Such a desire is inseparable from true Christianity, and is in fact one of the graces of God's Holy Spirit. *Add to your virtue brotherly kindness.* No Christian therefore can voluntarily throw an obstruction in the way of the union of the churches. If he has even offended his neighbor, he hastens to remove the offence, that the brotherly feelings may again be restored. This desire has happily been growing among the churches in these latter years. All that embrace the fundamental principles of christianity, have for some years been drawing nearer and nearer to each other in the exercise of christian love. We may learn from this, as well as from many other signs of the times, that the period is drawing near when the jarring jangling parties in the church of Christ will exchange their angry controversies for the affectionate salutations of brotherly kindness; and march in solid column against the enemies of truth. But it must be evident that this blessed union never can be effected, unless it be mutually agreed, that the Psalms of Scripture shall be exclusively used in every assembly of the worshippers of God. It never can be attained by the use of human inventions so long as the witnesses for the truth remain upon the earth. We must speak the truth, and so long as men cherish these errors, the truth will create divisions. This is not one of the small trifling causes of division which might be thrown into the shade and forgotten. We cannot join in that worship which we believe to be a species of idolatry. We must testify against it. There are hundreds and thousands at this moment who would choose to suffer martyrdom in the flames, rather than let their voices be heard in the use of songs which God has not authorized. It must also be obvious that in proportion as the subject shall be better understood, their numbers will constantly increase. It was only by keeping the world in ignorance that the friends of human Psalmody have had so much success among mankind. It was by the suppression of the preface of Dr. W. and calling his "IMITATION" by the name of "VENUSION," that they were enabled to introduce his compositions so generally into the churches in this part of the world. But the evil effects of this kind of conduct have now begun to appear. The christian world are beginning to see their folly. The friends of truth will soon be convinced, and will hasten to remove the obstructions which have been thrown in the way of Christian brother-